

A.I.M.'s Housing Facilitator; Building for Tomorrow Today

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ary Simons was appointed East Tennessee Housing Facilitator on February 24, 2001.

This appointment stems from a state grant from the Creating Homes Initiative of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities that provides funds for A.I.M. to hire an East Tennessee Housing Facilitator and an A.I.M. housing coordinator.

These positions embody the provision of educational and technical assistance to communities in the promotion of furthering permanent housing options for persons with mental illness.

Simons is already working with the Chattanooga Housing Authority under the HUD Section 8 voucher program to place A.I.M. members and other area consumers who are either homeless or living in government-owned public housing complexes into Belvoir area apartments.

A voucher is a promise from the federal government to help pay the rent for a fair-market home. Vouchers range from \$477 for a one-bedroom home to \$845 for a four-bedroom home. The voucher includes utilities. The low/very low-income tenant pays a maximum of 1/3 of his or her income toward the rent and the federal government pays the difference between the tenant rate and the fair-market rate.

"This is a win/win situation for both tenant and landlord," Simons said. "The low income tenant has 2/3 of his or her income remaining after paying rent to provide for other living needs. And, the landlord is assured of receiving the rental subsidy every month."

Grants Expand Housing

A state grant of \$323,000 combined with a \$700,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will enable the A.I.M. Center to buy additional housing for persons with a mental illness

A.I.M. will receive state funds from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD).



Mary Simons

"These grants will allow A.I.M. to purchase one and two bedroom duplexes in East Ridge that will provide permanent housing opportunities for 29 low and very low income individuals," said A.I.M. President Bonnie Currey.

HUD rental subsidies will enable the tenants to reduce their lease payment to less than 1/3 of their income. Income for this population is typically about \$500 per month from Supplemental Security Income benefits.

"The residents will live independently with the support of a consumer resident manager, as well as the support of A.I.M. staff and other clinical programs in the community," Currey said.

The state grant resulted from the Creating Homes Initiative, a DMHDD effort to create 2,005 new housing options statewide by 2005. Chattanooga along with Jackson, Memphis and Nashville

were targeted communities for Phase I of the project. They were viewed as having the most need for permanent housing for persons with a mental illness.

The Chattanooga grant was part of \$4.5 million designated through the partnership of the DMHDD and THDA.

With the addition of the duplexes, A.I.M. Center will have a total of 53 housing units serving 70 adults with mental illness.

Friends Helping Friends



ashville's Friends Helping Friends Drop-In Center celebrated its 11th anniversary last fall.

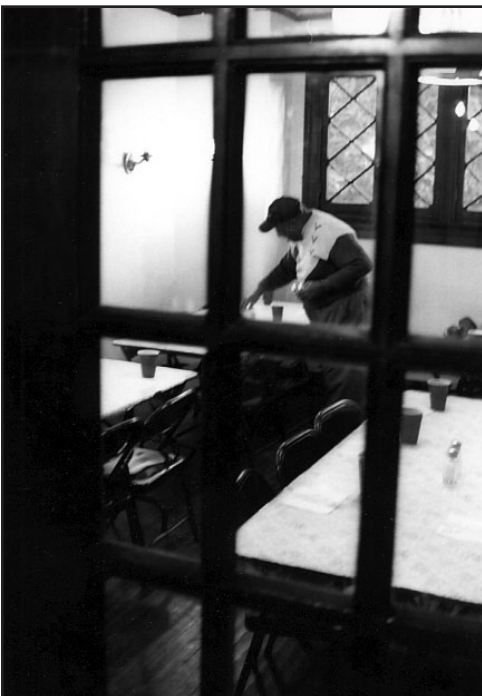
Located at 1617 Sixteenth Avenue South, Friends Helping Friends is a non-profit organization for individuals who experience some form of mental illness. Operated by and for consumers, the center provides activities for members, as well as peer counseling and advocacy support.

"Our philosophy asserts that achievement is based on consumers and professionals working together," said Ray Sissom, president of the Board of Directors. "On an average day, 30 to 50 consumers come to the center. We have just finished a strategic planning session on many innovative ideas that we feel will help empower our consumers."

Friends Helping Friends was the first drop-in center established in Tennessee and has served as a model for other centers.

Initially funded through a block grant administered by the DMHDD, it now has grants from the Frist Foundation, Junior League, a Memorial Grant, DMHDD as well as individual contributions.

Directed by Gregory Fisher, the center is open six days a week and provides transportation for those who need it. The center also serves hot meals, averaging more than 1,000 meals every month.



Clockwise From Top: Michael Oliver and David York catch up on some TV.

- Oliver phones a friend checking on him.
- Consumers "hang out" in between peer sessions.
- Calvin helps prepare for the next meal.
- The Friends Helping Friends house.



Friendship Works

New Facility for Knoxville Drop-In Center

For the past 12 years, Knoxville's Friendship House Drop-In Center has been a bastion of support and a provider of camaraderie for its many consumers.

Under its roof, recreational activities such as dances and card tournaments have helped form many social bonds.

Support groups and health care screenings have enlightened members. And, vocational training has helped find jobs for more than 620 individuals.

Like any growing family, space begins to play a factor in daily activity. So, it was decided by the Helen Ross McNabb Center's staff and board of directors to embark on a capital campaign. A campaign to raise funds to renovate the existing facility and construct a newer one adjacent to the original.

The Helen Ross McNabb Center, which provides management for Friendship House, named the campaign "Friendship Works."

The campaign, launched in 2000, under the leadership of University of Tennessee President Emeritus Joseph E. Johnson and his wife, Pat, has so far raised \$1.2 million of the \$1.45 million needed.

Mary Crawford, Public Relations Director for Friendship House, said the funds should be secured soon.

"Over \$800,000 is on hand and the balance will be paid through pledges by 2005," Crawford said.



Left: Artist's rendition of the "new" Friendship House. The design will incorporate the already existing structure. The renovated building will have more offices, meeting rooms and a commercial kitchen. The additional office space will allow the vocational rehabilitation programs to be relocated so all programs will be under one roof. Below: The current Friendship House building.

Other elements of the vocational connection will be a:

- reception area
- dining area
- snack bar
- outdoor patio
- parking lot

Crawford said that with a more efficient center, budget costs should not increase.

"Since we are combining our vocational services at one location with updated equipment and training facilities, there shouldn't be a great change in costs," Crawford said.

The current operating budget is \$102,743.

The Friendship House Drop-In Center houses the Helen Ross McNabb Center's Social and Recreational Services. Founded in 1989, it was the first drop-in center in the region, and only the second in Tennessee.

It is a place where consumers can visit with friends, receive group support and participate in recreational activities. Job employment services are also available.

For more information contact the Friendship House at (865) 544-3841.



The components for the new state-of-the-art-facility will be twofold:

- The Friendship House Drop-In Center will serve 50 additional consumers a day, increasing the daily attendance to 100. It will have a larger industrial kitchen, bigger activity, family and recreational rooms. In addition, it will have a gym/exercise room and staff offices.
- The Friendship House Rehabilitation Services, which will include the vocational connection, is the second part. The rehabilitation component will be able to increase by 50 percent the number of consumers it serves. Services include job assessment, training and placement for its consumer members. The new facility will also house multiple training and meeting rooms to allow the staff to offer various rehabilitative services.



Bridging the Gap Through Education

Mental health support groups, especially those dealing with addiction, have long been recognized for their effectiveness in helping consumers deal with their illness.

The BRIDGES program adds a formal education component to the support group model to give consumers the tools they need on the road to recovery.

BRIDGES — Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals through Education and Support — is consumer-driven.

The education portion is a 14-week course based on two principles, learning about facts and learning about feelings. Classes are taught by consumers for consumers.

The curriculum was developed with input from more than 100 people who shared their knowledge.

Last year 650 consumers were served in 55 support groups across the state. The support groups are directed by trained class members who have completed the course.

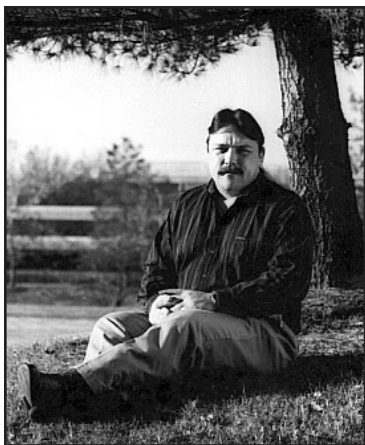
“When you educate someone you empower him,” said Dennis Wenner, director of Adult Services in the Division of Mental Health Services. “Freedom is only as good as the education you have.”

BRIDGES courses are free and available to anyone with a diagnosis of mental illness. The program is offered by the Tennessee Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers’ Association, through a grant from DMHDD.

For more information, call the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers’ Association at 1(800)459-2925.



Graduates from the BRIDGES training course.



In 2000, the DMHDD published "Back from Wherever I've Been," which contains stories from the BRIDGES program. The stories are of people recovering from mental illness. This is just one of the stories from the book.

"On the Edge" by Glynn Windham

I was born in Germany. My name is Dieter Hoffman. Don't know much about my early childhood except that I lived in an orphanage. I was about three years old when I was adopted by a couple from Texas. I have heard that I had some peculiar habits. I remember being taken to a doctor at six or seven years old. I was terrified every night when I went to bed. During the day I was always scared, not trusting anything. School was hard and I didn't fit in. In about fifth grade I started getting high. It was a great relief from reality. I was in disability classes and was having a lot of behavioral problems at home. My sister, who was also adopted, seemed to be doing fine.

When I was 18 I got scared again and tried to kill myself. I ended up with 34 stitches in both wrists. It scared the hell out of me. I became a heavy drinker and drug user. I joined the Navy hoping it would help, but things got worse. I was kicked out and institutionalized for drug and alcohol abuse. I got a job, got married and had a child, but I got divorced nine months after my daughter was born. My life was pretty much destroyed. The pills and alcohol were pretty bad. I got married again, but my paranoia increased even more, and it wasn't working either. I had already started self-mutilating to cleanse myself and get some much-needed attention. I moved around geographically hoping it would help. I kept getting hospitalized and put in alcohol and drug treatment. There was no hope for me. I was

losing it. I moved back to Alaska to try to get back with my second wife on several occasions but kept winding up in mental institutions. I was driving one day and had a bad wreck. I almost took someone else's life. This time I was headed to prison.

But, I had a bit of good luck and wound up in a dual diagnosis treatment program in Nashville. Finally I was working on both issues at once. I was introduced to BRIDGES educational groups at the drop-in center and started learning about my mental illness. One of the most important things was that I was not alone. There was a spark of hope. I had found peace. Between the dual diagnosis facility and BRIDGES, my life started changing. After classes I was trained to lead BRIDGES support groups. I got to go train the trainers. I wanted to tell the whole world that I had finally accomplished something. I had something to give back. I learned that we empower each other; that mental illness was not something to hide behind. I never could talk in front of other people, but here I was facilitating a support group and training other people.

BRIDGES has taught me that I am responsible for my mental health. I could wallow in self-pity or I could get involved and be united with others like me. Today my life still has its ups and downs, but I have learned how to get back up and keep trying because, when I didn't believe in myself, others in the program did. They kept assuring me that things were going to be all right. I didn't have to be ashamed any more either; we were all equal. Today I take my medication for my mental illness and go to support groups to get the information and support I need. BRIDGES has changed my life. If you are out there reading this, I hope you will come to find the peace and sanity I have found. The goals and dreams you have can be obtained. We are no longer alone.

